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Patrick Administration Distributes Nearly \$8 Million in Local Grants to Purchase and Protect 1,405 Acres of Open Space

BOSTON – Forests, wetlands, farms, rare species habitat, and the headwaters of a watershed are among landscapes that will be protected as a result of nearly \$8 million in grants to 23 Massachusetts communities announced today by Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian Bowles. Today's grants provide for the conservation of 1,405 acres of land.

"As the cost of land climbs in Massachusetts and the amount of open space dwindles, communities throughout the Bay State are looking for ways to preserve the woodlands, fields, riverbanks, trails and wildlife habitat that contribute so much to the quality of life here," Secretary Bowles said. "The grants I'm announcing today represent partnerships between communities and the Commonwealth to safeguard these vital natural resources for future generations."

Since 1961, EEA's Self-Help Program has helped cities and towns acquire land for conservation and outdoor recreation such as hiking, wildlife watching, fishing, hunting, and cross-country skiing. To qualify for grants, communities must supply local matching funds, and the protected open space must be open to the public. Municipalities may use grant funds to purchase land or partial interests (such as conservation restrictions), as well as for associated acquisition costs such as appraisal reports and closing fees.

This year's \$7.95 million grant round includes approximately \$6.2 million in state funding and \$1.7 million from the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund, which EEA's Division of Conservation Services administers for the Commonwealth.

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This year's funding for the Self Help and Urban Self Help programs (combined \$14 million) represent the largest expenditure in the history of the programs. The state's funding is matched by \$6.3 million in funding raised by cities and town, land trusts and private fundraising. The grants include six in the Connecticut River Valley and the Berkshires, six in Central Massachusetts, five in MetroWest and Northeastern Massachusetts, five in Southeastern Massachusetts and three on Cape Cod. Collectively, 13 projects protect rare species habitat, six protect land next to 1000-plus acre forest blocks, 11 protect key water resources, eight protect working farms, four protect regional trails and greenways, three protect unique archaeological sites, and two include the development of environmental education centers as part of the project. Four towns are receiving a grant for the first time.

The following communities and projects received FY 2008 Self-Help funding:

Amherst, Cushman Brook Corridor Project: \$427,000

- 28.66 acres
- The project will protect the headwaters of Mill River watershed.

Belchertown, Topping Farm: \$309,400

- 57 acres
- Grant funding enables the town to augment an existing 167-acre conservation area. The land being purchased protects the aquifer of Belchertown, Amherst, and Pelham and supports two rare species.

Boxborough, Mitchell Property: \$235,200

- 25.6 acres
- This parcel adds to a regional corridor of protected open space and permanently protects important wetland and wildlife habitat.

Boxford, Cargill Fields: \$418,000

- 14.5 acres
- The grant award provides for protection of a nine-acre hayfield and six acres of woodland that abut Fish Brook and Howes Pond.

Brewster, Stony Brook: \$500,000

- 9.8 acres
- This nearly ten-acre parcel is a wooded ridgeline that adds to a 1000-acre protected area that includes habitat for three rare species.

Clinton, Rauscher Farm: \$353,600

- 24.57 acres
- This project is the last large piece of undeveloped land in town and a part of an overall goal to preserve 62 acres in the area.

East Brookfield, Pelletier Property: \$416,000

- 118 acres
- This site is a part of a corridor of protected open space that includes a Wildlife Management Area, a conservation restriction, and Wells State Park.

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Easthampton, Echodale Farm: \$306,000

- 24.3 acres
- This parcel is part of a larger project with the Trust for Public Land and Pascommuck Conservation Trust that will protect the entire 164-acre farm.

Holliston, NSTAR Land: \$500,000

- 86.3 acres
- Currently owned by NSTAR, this land is contiguous to the town forest and within a Core Habitat area as defined by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

Hubbardston, Malone Road: \$290,400

- 67.5 acres
- This parcel adds to a 1000-acre corridor and will protect habitat for wildlife such as the American Bittern – a state-listed endangered species.

Northampton, Mineral Hills: \$470,000

- 72.1 acres
- This parcel will expand an existing conservation area and preserve a critical ecosystem and wildlife corridor.

Orleans, Sparrow Property: \$500,000

- 6.5 acres
- This parcel has frontage on Arey's Pond (a saltwater pond) and a tidal river, and is within the Pleasant Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Two Native American archeological sites are included on site.

Pembroke, Hill-Gummerus: \$500,000

- 96.9 acres
- The nearly 100-acre parcel includes two rare species, houses the Upper Chandler Pond Dam, and is adjacent to the town forest and an active recreation area.

Pepperell, Keyes-River Road: \$319,360

- 106 acres
- This parcel abuts an agricultural preservation restriction (APR) property, bringing the total number of protected acres to 145. It has been identified as priority habitat by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and includes land within the Petapawag Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Petersham, Gould Woodlot: \$275,200

- 87 acres
- This land includes frontage on Nelson Brook, a cold water stream, and abuts the Petersham State Forest and Harvard Forest properties. Harvard Forest hopes to make this land the centerpiece of the Gould Woodland Center for Conservation to share woodland knowledge, experiences and Best Management Practices the public.

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Princeton, Four Corners Hayfield: \$500,000

- 25 acres
- This acquisition will help preserve natural resources at the intersection of Gates and Old Colony Road. The land is part of potential relocation of Midstate Trail.

Rehoboth, Ministerial Lands: \$75,000

- 63 acres
- This land includes two streams, is close to the Palmer River, and is part of a larger effort to establish a greenway along the river and its tributaries. The Trustees of Reservations plans to acquire this land and then convey a conservation restriction to the town.
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Russell, Noble View: \$472,500

- 358.5 acres
- This parcel abuts the 13,000-acre Cobble Mountain Reservoir, which is owned by Springfield Water Department.

Wareham, Barker Property: \$224,000

- 19.6 acres
- This parcel is part of a larger project that protects 200 acres of coastal woodland, wetland, and shoreline on Great Neck that includes Roseate Tern, Common Tern, Eastern Box Turtle habitat.

West Newbury, Moseley Property: \$285,600

- 22.2 acres
- The property includes an open field and frontage on Indian Hill Road.

Westminster, Schenk Farm: \$186,000

- 61.4 acres
- The project is a part of a larger effort to protect a 108-acre farm. The Mid-State Trail bisects the property and the land includes two vernal pools.

Westport, Dunhams Brook: \$140,000

- 28 acres
- The parcel contains Dunhams Brook and links to over 60 acres of protected land creating one of the largest conservation areas in town.

Yarmouth, Dennis Pond: \$250,000

- 2.8 acres
- This small acquisition is the missing puzzle piece needed to complete a comprehensive land conservation project that completely surrounds the pond.

For more information about EEA's Self-Help Program, visit
<http://www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/selfhelp/default.htm>.

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